

# PRESS RELEASE

## Congressman John Conyers, Jr.

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Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary  
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### **Statement of Congressman John Conyers, Jr. on** **H.R. 476, the "Child Custody Protection Act"**

I strongly oppose H.R. 476, the "Child Custody Protection Act." H.R. 476 is unconstitutional, dangerous, anti-family, and incredibly broad.

- The bill is blatantly unconstitutional. It violates minors' due process rights by subjecting them to a far greater risk of physical harm. This is in specific violation of *Carey v. Population Services*, where the Supreme Court held that a state may not seek to deter sexual activity by "increasing the hazards attendant on it." The bill also contains an inadequate life exception and lacks any sort of health exception, in abrogation of *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*. Finally, the bill violates the Privileges and Immunities Clause by denying citizens the right to travel freely and enjoy the legal rights of citizens of other states.
- The bill is dangerous because it takes away safe alternatives to parental involvement, such as turning to close relatives and close family friends, and replaces them with life-endangering ones, such as hitchhiking, self-induced or back-alley abortions. If you don't believe me, ask Becky Bell's family. She died from a back alley abortion as a result of Indiana's parental consent law when she was afraid of confiding in her family.

The bill will inevitably lead to increased family violence. We know that one-third of teenagers who do not tell their parents about a pregnancy have already been the victim of family violence. We also know that the incidence of family violence only escalates when a teenage daughter becomes pregnant. This bill will only exacerbate those problems.

- The bill is anti-family because it will turn family members into criminals. In a state that requires the consent of both parents, a single parent who takes a child across state lines would be subject to criminal charges, even if the other parent was estranged or their whereabouts unknown. Grandparents would also be subject to prosecution, even if they were the child's primary caregiver.
- The legislation is incredibly broad. Supporters of this bill claim to be targeting predatory individuals that force and coerce a minor into obtaining an abortion. However, the net cast by this bill is far broader and far more problematic. Under the legislation, anyone simply transporting a minor could be jailed for up to a year or fined or both. Any bus driver or taxi driver unaware that the young woman has not engaged a formal parental involvement process could conceivably be sent to jail under this prohibition. The same applies to emergency medical personnel who may be aware they are taking a minor across state lines to obtain an abortion, but would have no choice if a medical emergency were occurring.

What we have is yet another shortsighted effort to politicize a tragic family dilemma that does nothing to respond to the underlying problem of teen pregnancies or dysfunctional families."